

EACC NEWS

The East Asia Christian Conference is an organ of continuing fellowship and co-operation among the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia.

Secretary for Information: Lee Soo Jin

February 1, 1973
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PEACE IN INDOCHINA

BANGKOK - After 25 long drawn-out years of death and destruction in Vietnam, a peace agreement has been signed by the contending forces. The Vietnam ceasefire agreement signed in Paris on January 27 by the Foreign Ministers of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN), Republic of Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) and the U.S.A. consists of a basic accord of 23 articles defining the political and military conditions of a peace settlement, and four supplementary protocols on the organization of a ceasefire. "The internal affairs of Cambodia and Laos," said the document, "shall be settled by the people of each of these countries without foreign interference."

The Government and people of the DRVN, by far, have welcomed the peace agreement without any apparent reservations. There seems to be no lingering bitterness - nor any doubts that this document contains sufficient guarantees to talk about "success" and even about "victory" for them. This is true even if everyone in Hanoi feels that the ceasefire may only be another lap in the struggle for eventual reunification of the two parts of Vietnam.

The people in Saigon, on the other hand, reacted to the peace announcement with inscrutable calm. There were pockets of excited chatter in homes and coffee shops, otherwise the announcement caused little stir. "We have hoped for peace and been let down so many times," said the driver of a rickety taxi. "Maybe the ceasefire will turn out badly. Still we are ready to take our chances."

In Laos, there were mixed feelings about the peace agreement. In Vientiane, the Defence and Finance Minister said, "We are the first victims of the Vietnam confrontation. But now we have nothing. We are not even included in the big conference to be held 30 days after the signing of the peace agreement. There is no joy here." Laotian Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma expects a ceasefire in Laos within 10 to 15 days after the Vietnam settlement "if negotiations between the Laotian Government and Pathet Lao progress speedily."

Asian newspapers generally welcomed the peace agreement, but many warned that the agreement was not in itself a guarantee of peace and stability in the region. In Manila the Philippines Daily Express said the big powers should now let the Vietnamese resolve their problems at their own pace. "Their good offices should be offered with no ulterior motive except to see to it that such a monstrosity that was Vietnam will never happen again."

In Jakarta the Indonesian Observer said: "For the Vietnamese people both in the North and the South the cessation of hostilities is not the end of suffering but the beginning of a new era of tremendous difficulties". The Jakarta Times asked: "If the agreement is only a trick to get the United States out it will produce peace only for the Americans but not for the Vietnamese and the Southeast Asians?"

RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION IN INDOCHINA

GENEVA - A new manifestation of Christian concern in Indochina is the Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina, recently established by the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS) of the World Council of Churches. The first meeting of the Board of this Fund was held in Bangkok on 15 - 16 November, 1972. At this meeting, the Board recognised that its role should be distinct from both the existing service programmes supported by the Churches and also from the massive Government-level programmes which will be needed for post-war reconstruction in Indochina.

The major immediate tasks for the Board include the documentation of existing programmes in Indochina and research into new life styles and opportunities for service, "taking into account the needs of the people in Indochina" and using local expertise in research work and in the implementation of projects. The Fund has already received pledges totalling US\$1.2 million from churches throughout the world. In order to avoid proliferation of financial appeals, which may create confusion for member churches, the Board decided that financial matters for the Fund be handled by CICARWS on behalf of the Fund; however, the Board will be the sole authority to decide on its spending.

The second meeting of the Board will take place in Hong Kong on 8 - 9 February, 1973. Board members will study the latest situation, receive reports on education and youth, health care, social welfare and employment, agriculture, refugees and ethnic minorities and other needs in Indochina before making substantial decisions regarding the initiation and implementation of appropriate programmes.

Meanwhile a plane carrying 9 tons of medicines and medical supplies left Paris last week for Hanoi. The cargo and the cost of its transportation have been provided by church agencies through the WCC. The plane was packed and prepared by a team of volunteer workers in Paris who spent some US\$300,000 on the purchase of antibiotics, vitamins, surgical goods and equipment. The medicines and equipment will be put at the disposal of the Red Cross in Hanoi and will be distributed to hospitals and clinics caring for war victims.

At present the WCC channels some US\$560,000 each year to Indochina. Of this, \$440,000 are used on various programmes of relief and rehabilitation in south Vietnam while approximately \$100,000 worth of medical supplies are sent to north Vietnam and areas administered by the PRG.

NEW ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY, HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

HONG KONG - The Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Christian Council has appointed Rev. Alan Chan as the new Acting General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council with effect from 1st January, 1973. Rev. Chan has served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Service and Secretary for the Diocesan Welfare Council of the Anglican Church and continues to serve as Vicar of Kei Oi Church.

Rev. Chan comes to this post with considerable ecumenical experience, having served as a delegate to the World Student Christian Federation meeting in Strausbourg, France, early in 1960. More recently, Rev. Chan attended the "Salvation Today" Conference and the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC, in Bangkok. A graduate of Union Theological College (Anglican) in Hong Kong, Rev. Chan received the Master of Divinity degree from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California in 1966.

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ASEAN MEET IN KUALA LUMPUR

BANGKOK - The Foreign Ministers of the five-member (Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will meet February 14 - 15 in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the possible effects of the Vietnam ceasefire on the economic and security situation in the region. The agenda for this meeting will be worked out on February 14 and will be taken up in full scale talks the following day. Diplomatic sources have disclosed that the meeting will assess the effects of the Vietnam ceasefire on plans to declare a zone of peace and neutrality in Southeast Asia, possibly to include all of Indochina. The sources also said the ministerial conference might also be expanded to include not only members of ASEAN, but also the governments in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma.

WCC SELLS ITS STOCK IN FIRMS INVOLVED IN SOUTH AFRICA

GENEVA - The World Council of Churches has issued a printed list of 650 corporations directly involved in investment in or trade with Southern Africa. Simultaneously it announced it had sold its holdings in corporations figuring in the list. Total market value was approximately US\$1.5 million.

The first list of corporations, with other lists to follow, included firms in the USA, UK, Netherlands and Switzerland. It was distributed last week at the semi-annual meeting of the Executive Committee at Bangalore, India. The action was in line with an instruction given to the Council's finance director, by the policy-making Central Committee when it met at Utrecht in August 1972. That body decided to disinvest because "the effect of foreign investments in Southern Africa is to strengthen the white minority regimes in their oppression of the majority of the people of this region." The 1968 Uppsala Assembly of the WCC had said that investments in "institutions that perpetuate racism" should be terminated.

The Utrecht Central Committee also urged member churches, Christian agencies and individual Christians outside Southern Africa to "use all their influence, including stockholder action", to press corporations to withdraw investment from and cease trading with Southern Africa. The Executive Committee which recently met in Bangalore strongly supported a suggestion that the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) make available to the churches consultants with expertise on investment in Southern Africa. They would be nationally or regionally based.

The Executive Committee also made a third set of allocations totalling US\$ 200,000 to 25 organisations combating racism on five continents. It regretted no grants had been recommended for Asia.

UNPRECEDENTED DROUGHT IN INDIA

NEW DELHI - The failure of the monsoon in 1972 has brought about a severe famine situation by which two-thirds of the country has been affected. In the words of the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, "It is a national calamity". The Indian Government has announced that the severe drought had produced food shortages in 14 of the 21 states, affecting some 200 million people. Many families have left the land and crowded into the towns and cities. Indian sources claim that the drought is the worst for 100 years in some areas. Present food stocks are not sufficient to meet the needs.

The Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) of India, which played a big role in the relief operation for refugees from Bangladesh, has appealed to the World Council of Churches (WCC) for help in its assistance programme. The WCC's Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS) has appealed to member churches of the WCC and their related agencies to provide some US\$ 300,000 for assistance to the millions of drought victims in India. Money channeled through the WCC will be used to provide food for more than 100,000 people over the next four months. In addition, a well drilling rig together with winch and rotation motors will be made available as a contribution to a water resources programme.

EACC 5TH ASSEMBLY, SINGAPORE

BANGKOK - Singapore will be the venue of the 5th Assembly of the EACC from June 6 - 12, 1973. The EACC is an organ of continuing fellowship and cooperation among 87 Churches and 14 Christian Councils in 15 countries in East Asia extending from Pakistan to Japan to New Zealand. The EACC normally meets in Assembly every 4 years to set forth the priorities and programmes for the next four years. The last Assembly was held in Bangkok in 1968.

Appropriately themed, "Christian Action in the Asian Struggle", the 5th Assembly will feature a keynote address by Dr. M. M. Thomas, Director, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) of India and three Niles Memorial lectures which will set forth the possibilities of Christian action in the Asian struggle for justice, liberation and development. The presentation of sub-themes will bring to the Assembly for consideration, thrusts and priorities of Christian action programmes for the next 4 years. The three sections of the Assembly would have the following themes: Message and Communication; Life and Action; Justice and Service. These programmes will be presented by the audio-visual media of drama, films, and an art contest.

The 5th Assembly will also deliberate on the presentation and adoption of Constitutional amendments, the election of officers and the appointment of Committees for the implementation of programmes for the next quadrennium. Time will also be allocated for deliberations on action to be taken on special resolutions and financial matters. Some 280 delegates, observers and consultants will attend this Assembly.

BRIEFS

- ... United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim announced at a press conference on January 8 that he had appointed Ambassador Johan B. Maramis - Indonesian Ambassador in Brussels, former Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN, and President of the Economic and Social Council of 1970 - to be the next Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE). Ambassador Maramis will assume office on June 1, 1973.
- ... Mr. Lee Soo Jin, former Chairman of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in Singapore, has been appointed Information Secretary of the EACC with effect from 15th January, 1973. A Sociology graduate from the University of Singapore, Soo Jin had been involved with publications in the Singapore SCM prior to his appointment.

NEED FOR
TECHNICIANS
IN LAOS

The Director General of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, Mr. Phagna Houmpheng Prathoumvan has requested ACS to assist in the training of tractor operators/mechanics and to explore the possibility of sending trainees to Thailand. He plans to increase the number of skilled technicians to maintain heavy equipment allotted to the ministry for use in resettlement villages by refugees.

To meet this need, ACS will make a survey of technical schools and heavy equipment companies in Thailand having training programmes for the repair, maintenance and operation of tractors, bulldozers, graders and the like.

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FRIENDSHIP
SEMINAR
1972

A "Friendship Seminar 1972" on Development was organised by the Young Christian Farmers Movement with the cooperation of ACS in Vinh Long Province, from 28 December 1972 to 1 January 1973. This Seminar facilitated the exchange of experiences in development work among the 75 participants representing 26 different social and/or religious groups and organisations. Seminar participants reviewed case studies on the socio-economic aspects of community development work against the backdrop of their own concrete experiences with the purpose of seeking a more efficient rationalization of development work in the country.

The Seminar concluded by resolving to promote greater cooperation between all groups engaged in development programmes in the fields of research, personnel training and mutual aid. It was also stressed that social extension workers should undergo inservice training and seminars organised to expose social workers to other development projects. In all development programmes, it was recognised that the nation's indigenous potential is the most essential part, whereas foreign aid is merely subordinate. Therefore, "kindling community awareness and the spirit of self-reliance is the most decisive factor towards successful development projects".

ACS VISITED
BY
REV. GRANT

Rev. Alex J. Grant, missionary of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (presently Head, Institute of Ethnic Studies of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines) visited Vientiane on behalf of the National Council of Churches in the USA from 5 - 10 January, to explore possibilities for the participation or contribution of American Churches to the programme of reconstruction and reconciliation in the post war development of Laos.

He was briefed by the Field Director on ACS work and was introduced to officials of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) and other international organisations for assistance in his survey. Rev. Grant plans to return in early February for further consultation with RLG and ACS.

THE YWCA
AND
ACS

The World YWCA has been associated with the work of Asian Christian Service in Vietnam and Laos since 1966 and out of this cooperative effort has grown, quite spontaneously, a YWCA of Saigon. In the course of the last year, under the able leadership of Miss Le Thi The, this Association was able to establish a small student hostel and a community centre with a variety of classes and activities for youth and adults. Refugee services have also been part of the YWCA's deep concern and four teams of volunteers (totalling 32 YWCA members) have worked in a large camp just outside Saigon on medical care, health education, relief and recreation. The YWCA has not only started from local initiatives, but is run by a fully indigenous group of women and girls. The YWCA, apart from helping the YWCA of Saigon, is still associated with and supporting the work of ACS.



(162) More refugees from Thakhek, Khammouane Province, who arrived by boat along the Mekong, are temporarily accommodated at the fluvial parade grandstand at Savannakhet.



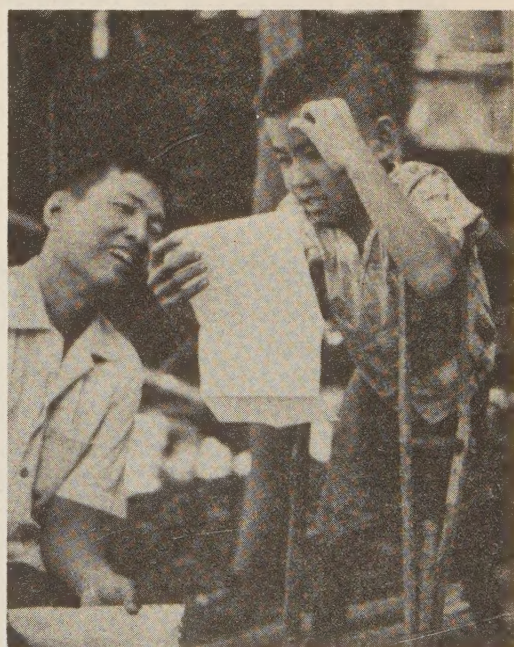
(163) RMC staff packing full cream milk donated by Swiss Churches through the World Council of Churches. These 500 gram packages will be distributed to refugees from various parts in S. Laos who have sought safe havens in Savannakhet.



(164) Another lecture on health care at one of the Sanao refugee villages.



(165) Two Thai nurses of the Rural Medical Centre (RMC) staff temporarily assigned to do emergency medical relief work at Tha Sanao, seen bathing a x refugee child.



(166) Somphone, an 8-year old polio victim reading a letter from his sister, seen with his father. With ACS assistance, Somphone receives treatment at the RLG Orthopaedic Centre in Vientiane. He is also taught to read and write at this Centre.



a sign of christian presence

ASIAN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

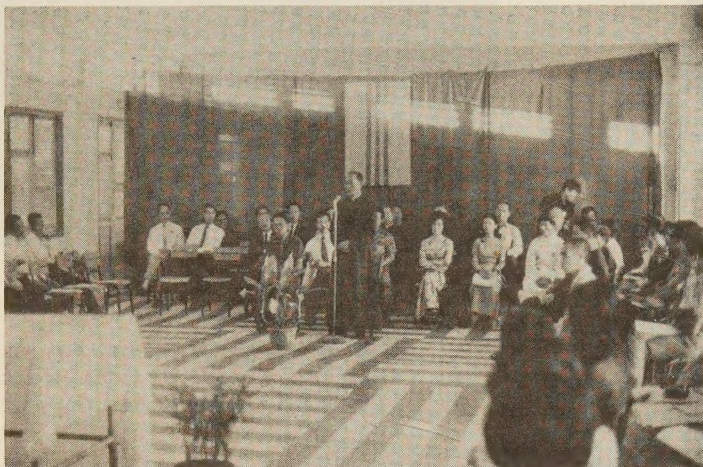
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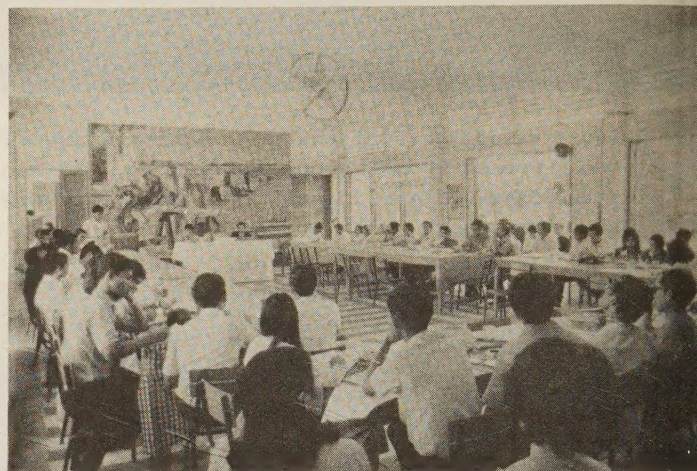
Vietnam
Laos
Cambodia

Director: Samuel M. Isaac

Information: Lee Soo Jin



(158) The Bishop of Vinh Long speaking at the Opening ceremony of the Friendship Seminar 1972. Seated behind him are Provincial officials, representatives of different Churches (Catholic, Evangelical, Cao Dai) and members of the Development Programme Coordinating Committee.



(159) Opening session of the Friendship Seminar, December 1972 in Vinh Long. Attended by 75 participants from 26 social organisations from all four military regions of S. Vietnam.



(160) Friendship Seminar participants visiting a pilot project to improve the living conditions of a village in Vinh Long. This project is sponsored by the Canadian Red Cross.



(161) Nguyen Uoc, a delegate of Caritas Hue diocese expressing his viewpoint in a group discussion at the Friendship Seminar 1972.